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Author(s): Greenhill, Kathryn ; Wiebrands, Constance

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The unconference: a new model for better professional communication

Kathryn Greenhill
Emerging Technologies Specialist
Murdoch University Library
k.greenhill@murdoch.edu.au

Constance Wiebrands
Acting Manager
Flexible Delivery and Lending
Services
Curtin University Library
c.wiebrands@curtin.edu.au

Abstract

Unconferences are gatherings of people united by a passion, where the content and structure of the day is driven by the participants. An unconference is often facilitated using the Open Spaces Technology model. This uses the four flow principles:

- Whoever comes are the right people
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
- Whenever it starts is the right time
- When it's over, it's over

During 2007 three library unconferences happened in Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane. The authors of the paper were involved in organising the Perth "Library 2.0 on the Loose" unconference and have also participated in three other unconferences - two outside of the library field. They discuss the unconference model as an effective and surprisingly professional way of transferring knowledge and creating networks.

This paper outlines the tools and methods used to organise an unconference, the challenges faced and the lessons learnt, and feedback received from participants of the Perth unconference. The paper suggests that this informal way of physical meeting, with sessions determined by the attendees parallels the informal conversations taking place online using the new web tools.

Keywords

Professional communication; conferences; unconferences; Web 2.0; learning; community; open space technology; Australia

Intended primary audiences

Library staff; sector leaders.

INTRODUCTION

"[P]eople's need to congregate and confer is one of the things that defines our humanity and, for a multitude of reasons, meetings and gatherings of people have taken place since the nearly days of civilization." [Rogers, 2003, p.2]

Despite the myriad electronic tools and online forums currently available, our desire to meet and talk face-to-face is still as strong as ever. For the professional organisation the conference has been well-used as an event for people to meet, exchange views, share information, debate and publicise the work they are doing in their individual institutions.

The unconference has recently become popular as a type of meeting, bringing together people interested in common issues or topics. This paper describes the unconference and examines its usefulness as a medium for information sharing and learning within the library profession. It outlines the key features we have observed about unconferences, and some differences we have observed between the unconferences we have attended. The ways in which traditional conferences differ from unconferences are examined, and the experience of the 2008 West Australian Library Unconference is discussed. Finally, we discuss some of the results from a survey conducted of participants at the 2008 Western Australian Library Unconference.

DEFINITION, THEORY, HISTORY

The term 'unconference' implies both similarities to and differences from the traditional conference. According to Wikipedia [Wikipedia, 2008b] the term can be applied to "a wide range of gatherings that try to avoid one or more aspects of a conventional conference, such as high fees and sponsored presentations." Follett [2006] states that an unconference is a

self-organizing forum for idea sharing, networking, learning, speaking, demonstrating, and generally interacting with [others]... based on the premise that in any professional gathering, the people in the audience – not just those selected to speak on stage – have interesting thoughts, insights and expertise to share. ...Everyone who attends an unconference... is required to participate in some way: to present, to speak on a panel, to show off a project, or just to ask a lot of questions.

Many unconferences are run using a methodology called Open Space Technology. This methodology aims to "combine the level of synergy and excitement present in a good coffee break [where useful discussion occurs] with the substantive activity and results characteristic of a good meeting" [Owen, 1997, p. 3. Parentheses from the authors]. The Four Principles of Open Space Technology are:

1. *Whoever comes are the right people*
2. *Whatever happens is the only thing that could have*
3. *Whenever it starts is the right time*
4. *When it's over, it's over*

An additional maxim from Owen is "The Law of Two Feet", which states that "if... any person finds him or herself in a situation where they are neither learning nor contributing, they must use their two feet and go to some more productive place." [Owen, 1997, p.98]. Hermann [1998] adds that

This simple rule makes everyone fully responsible for the quality of their own work and work experience. It creates bumblebees who buzz from session to session, cross-pollinating and connecting pieces of the work. It creates butterflies who may not join any formal sessions, choosing instead to float at the edges. They create the space for everyone to appreciate the energies and synergies unfolding in the work of the conference. Sometimes the most

amazing solutions seem to come out of nowhere -- so that's where butterflies tend to look for them.

The popularisation of unconferences began among the programming community in 2005, although the term "unconference" was used as far back as 1998 [Bosak, 1998]. The first unconference publicly open to all participants was *BarCamp Palo Alto* [Wikipedia, 2008a]. It was held on 19-21 August 2005 and organised in just six days. This was in response to the similarly (un)structured, invitation-only "Foocamp" held annually by O'Reilly Media. Foocamp (**F**riends **O**f **O**'Reilly Camp) brought together leading thinkers who used an unstructured format to discuss the latest issues in technology.

The first BarCamp was organised via word of mouth and was restricted to just 200 attendees who brought their sleeping bags and lived and slept the unconference over an entire weekend. The publicity for the event [Smith, 2005] described it as:

an open, welcoming, once-a-year event for geeks to camp out for a couple days with wifi and smash their brains together. It's about love and geekery and having a focal point for great ideas.

Approximately eight months after this first BarCamp, on 14 April 2006, the first single day *Library Camp East* was organised and held at Ann Arbor in the United States [Blyberg, 2006]. Ann Arbor has continued to host a library camp on an annual basis.

The first library camp in the Southern hemisphere was the *L2 Unconference* held in Melbourne on 2 March 2007. This was hosted by Yarra Plenty Regional Library and again facilitated using Open Space Technology [Bossypri, 2007]. Photographs of the event show hungry librarians clustered around a tea trolley, people kneeling over butcher's paper as they decide topics for the day and images of sessions where they discussed wikis, Second Life and mashups.

In the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, over thirty library unconferences have been held or are planned before the end of 2008 [LISWiki, 2008]. BibCamps have been held in Sweden and Germany (See Appendix 1 for more details of these unconferences, including links to the wikis associated with each).

The authors of this paper were involved in organising the second library unconference in Australia, *Library 2.0 on the Loose*, held at the State Library of Western Australia on 3 August 2007. We also helped organise the *Beyond Library 2.0: getting our hands dirty* library unconference in the same venue on 22 August 2008. We have also facilitated sessions at four other unconference events - *Perth BarCamp 2007*, *Perth PodCamp 2007*, the *slq Library 2.0 Unconference 2007* (State Library of Queensland) and the Western Australian *School Libraries and Web 2.0 Unconference March 2008* (See Appendix 1). Although these were all unconferences, there was a large variation between the elements of them. The venues, support structure, formality, catering, discussion topics and participants all varied. Some of these variations are discussed below when considering the elements of unconferences.

ELEMENTS OF UNCONFERENCES

The basic principles of the unconference, particularly "whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened" allow great flexibility in planning and structure. The whole point is to provide a forum for participants to discuss what they want, when they want. There is no right or wrong way to host or organise an unconference.

It is, however, extremely important that the organisers of an unconference are attuned to the culture of the participants likely to attend. This does not mean that they need to mimic exactly the formal

conferences held in this field - far from it. If the organisers understand the culture of likely participants, then they know which parts of the day are likely to feel unfamiliar to the participants and where better scaffolding will likely be needed.

Organisers

An unconference organised and hosted by an existing institution may be considered somewhat more "legitimate" and "official" by participants. When organised by an institution, responsibility for the unconference is likely to be clearer. It will probably be easier to get resources like rooms, food and publicity through the parent body.

When an unconference is organised by a group of volunteers, many of the tasks will have to be done by the volunteers in their own time. In our experience our work places were supportive. Additionally volunteers tend to be committed and passionate about the event, which helps with the business of getting the job done. It is possible that participants will have more ownership of the event, as everyone is just as "official" as anyone else involved. Legal formalities will be trickier, as without being an incorporated body, third party liability insurance will need to be covered by the venue, and there will not necessarily be a bank account for handling sponsorship payments.

The two Western Australian Library 2.0 unconferences had organisers from different library sectors - three from university libraries, two from the State Library, one special librarian and one public librarian. They were self selected and continued the organising the unconference in 2007 after the Western Australian branch of the Australian Library and Information Association's initial survey of librarians about preferred time and place.

The first Western Australian Library Unconference was organised in around seven weeks, although the venue was booked earlier. The second W.A. Library Unconference was organised in seventeen weeks. The unconferences were different from each other, but feedback from participants indicates that the level of organisation did not mean that one unconference was better than the other.

The first Western Australian Library Unconference was organised with no face to face meetings. The second one had a single two hour face to face meeting.

The main tool used by the organising group was email: an email list set up using Google Groups. The group also used personal emails and instant messaging, and some information was shared using Google Docs. The unconference wiki was used to record decisions already made, rather than a place to collaborate on organisational decisions. The majority of unconferences use wikis for participants to register themselves and indicate how they would like to participate in or contribute to the event.

Publicity

Typically an unconference is publicised via online social networks and listservs rather than print newsletters or advertising. Usually there will be a website (often in wiki format) for the unconference before any publicity is distributed. Sometimes the first publicity for an event will be associated with organising the event, rather than details about the event itself.

PodCamp Perth, for example, began as a site describing the PodCamp concept and proposing that a PodCamp should be organised in Australia [Barber, 2007]. (Podcamp is described as "a usually free BarCamp-style community UnConference for new media enthusiasts and professionals including bloggers, podcasters, YouTubers, social networkers, and anyone curious about new media.") Potential participants voted for the city in which the first national PodCamp would be held (Perth won). The 2007 *Western Australian Library Unconference* was initially publicised via a survey about times and dates. The 2008 *West Australian Library Unconference* was publicised on the West Australian Information Network email list [WAIN - *Western Australian Information Network*, 2007], which reaches many library workers around Western Australia. It was also mentioned on a number

of blogs written by West Australian librarians [For example, Bennett, 2008; Greenhill, 2008; Gross, 2008].

Publicity material should be created to:

1. Call for sponsors and announce the date, time and venue
2. Inform potential participants about how to register, and invite topics
3. Announce any logistical information participants may need to know about the day, and to announce sponsorship.

Costs

Sponsorship is essential for unconferences that do not charge participants to attend, especially if food is to be supplied. There are other budget items like a wireless connection at the venue and stationery like butcher's paper and pens, and of course the venue itself. For unconferences organised by volunteers, handling sponsorship money can be complicated.

Perth PodCamp and BarCamp had sponsorship from several sources, including local web design and hosting companies, alternative media companies, the Australian Web Industry Association, the local vocational Education centre and from Microsoft. For the Western Australian Library Unconference, the State Library provided the venue and the facilities free of charge. Money for the food, stationery and the prize used as an incentive to fill in feedback forms was provided by four university libraries and the Local Government Librarians' Association of Western Australia (LocLib). The total budget used for 2008 was A\$810.

Participants for the State Library of Queensland Unconference paid a small fee for refreshments, while the venue and facilities were donated by the State Library of Queensland [*slq Library 2.0 Unconference*, 2007]. Guildford Grammar School in Perth provided the venue, network access and refreshments along with administrative support (name tags, printing off certificates etc) for the *School Libraries and Web 2 Unconference*. This unconference also had the support of the Educational Computing Association of Western Australia (ECAWA) which allowed access to their wiki for registrations and agenda, "as well as allowing us to conduct the conference under their auspices." (Alison Spicer-Wensley, personal communication, 10 September 2008).

An unconference where there is no cost to participants may be perceived differently, with some considering it to be likely to be less professional or of lesser value. Discussing Library Camp West, which is to be held at the University of Denver in October 2008, Lawson [2008] comments that not charging a fee may ensure that *only* local participants attend:

I think most people would be a little leery of asking to go out of state to a free unconference, fearing the boss would say "you want me to buy you a plane ticket and hotel room for a conference run by three people with a free wiki who decided to put on a show?" Free works against you there; free is Not Serious.

Charging no fee to participants may attract students and others who are usually not able to attend such events due to expense. It may also change the expectations of participants - where they don't feel they have to "get their money's worth" out of the event, they may be more inclined to be experimental. Participants may also be more forgiving of shortcomings such as technology problems and presenters' lack of preparation, as will be shown in our later discussion on results from the survey we conducted.

Food

The informal nature of unconferences means that asking participants to bring or buy their own food would be appropriate.

For the Western Australian library un conferences, we decided to provide lunch although the venue was in the middle of the restaurant district. We felt that it was important to keep the group together to continue the momentum of the day and to allow informal networking. We picked up pizza from a local "boutique" pizzeria and had volunteers cut up fruit and lay out biscuits on trays. We bought tea and coffee, borrowed cups from the State Library and had these available most of the day.

Venue

All un conferences we attended were in the central city and less than two minutes from public transport, with the exception of the school libraries un conference, which was held in a suburban school library (and accessible via suburban rail).

In our opinion, the ideal venue for a library un conference would provide:

- a central location, within easy reach of public transport
- free wireless access for all participants
- a central room where all participants can meet at the start and end of the day
- a room big enough for all participants where lunch and refreshments can be served
- a "break out" room where people can meet informally
- data-projectors in each room if people want to use their PCs to present
- whiteboards and marker pens in every room
- a computer lab with up-to-date computers for hands-on sessions
- several smaller rooms for concurrent sessions - preferably within very easy walking distance of each other
- secure lock-up facilities if people want to bring expensive gear for others to try out

Numbers

In many cases, the venue capacity will determine the number of participants. The first Western Australian library un conference attracted around 90 people. Registrations for the 2008 Western Australian library un conference opened on 1 July 2008, with participants invited to add their details on the wiki (<http://unconferencewalibrary.pbwiki.com>). By midday on 2 July all 75 places were filled. As one blogger noted, West Australian library workers "are keen for professional development opportunities, it seems" [Gross, 2008]! Space limitations at the State Library of Western Australia meant that initially we could only accommodate 75 people. Eventually more space was found so that a total of 100 people could attend. The additional 25 places also filled very quickly.

The Western Australian Library un conference 2008 had a "waiting list" for people who wanted to attend but were not quick enough to register for a place. Participants were asked when they registered to contact a person on "standby" if they were unable to make it on the day. This happened several times with no other intervention by the organisers.

Invitees

There is nothing to stop the organisers from specifically inviting particular people to attend the un conference. Perth PodCamp 2007, being a national conference, involved podcasters and media commentators being flown from interstate. An interstate speaker opened the slq Library 2.0 Un conference 2007 and the facilitator was flown in from Melbourne.

Weekday or weekend?

Three of the library un conferences were held on a Friday, while the school library un conference and Perth BarCamp 2007 were held on a Saturday. Perth PodCamp (27 – 28 October 2007) held the "un conference" sessions on the Saturday and other events ("Geeks in the Grass", a photography walk) on the Sunday [*PodCamp Community UnConferences: PodCamp Perth 2007*, 2007].

The ALIAWest committee which conducted the original survey about when to hold the first unconference felt that being a new and untried concept, it would be more likely that library staff would attend during a work day rather than a weekend. Initially we floated the idea of having it over two days: a Friday and a Saturday, as it was possible that some people who wanted to attend would not be able to take the Friday from work, but would come on a Saturday. In the end we chose to hold the event on a Friday, which proved to be a popular and successful day. The school libraries unconference which was held on a Saturday also successfully attracted a full house.

Unconferences work on the principle that people are there because they want to be and that they have a passion for what they will discuss. A Friday or a Saturday or any other day would probably attract a different crowd, but according to the Open Space philosophy this would be the right crowd of people for that event.

Volunteer participation

All participants are expected to join in with the conversations on the day and to create the content of the unconference.

There are also administrative tasks either side of the event. Sponsorship may be used to pay for services on the day (such as catering), or participants may be asked to help out with tasks such as preparing refreshments and cleaning up. For the Western Australian library unconferences, *Perth BarCamp 2007* and *Perth PodCamp 2007*, tasks needing to be done were listed on the unconference wikis and volunteers took responsibility for tasks like ordering food and setting up meeting rooms.

Facilitator and deciding topics for the day

The State Library of Queensland used a certified Open Space facilitator, Ann Hartigan, who previously facilitated the *L2 library unconference* in Melbourne. She respectfully allowed participants to control the events, but she set the ground rules for the day and directed the session selection. Session selection consisted of spreading large sheets of butcher's paper on the floor and asking the encircling crowd to come to write topics on these. She then clarified the topics and made suggestions about which ones could logically be run as one session. She then asked for people to facilitate or co-facilitate the session and for participants to indicate which sessions they would like to attend. The sessions were then written on a timetable on a whiteboard while participants ate morning tea.

The other unconferences used a wiki for people to suggest topics and take responsibility for facilitating these. Where there was a wiki, about eighty percent of content of each day was from topics from the wiki. Interestingly, in about 20% of these sessions were given by presenters different to those who were listed to do the session on the wiki.

For all the other unconferences, a member of the organising committee facilitated just the opening session. PodCamp, BarCamp and the school libraries unconference had a grid drawn on a whiteboard and facilitators were asked to write their sessions in a slot. PodCamp had visiting interstate speakers, so these were allocated the main lecture venue first.

Opening session

Many unconferences invite a speaker to introduce major concepts and fire up the crowd for the day. Some unconference organisers dismiss this as "too conferency". This is similar to the discussion that may happen around whether it is OK to have a theme for the day, or to offer sessions that require a lot of technical setup. There is no right or wrong around unconferences, if what happens is OK with the participants. The "law of two feet" dictates that participants are able to leave a session or suggest a change to the programme at any time.

The State Library of Queensland had a speaker on the topic "What is Library 2.0?" for about 20 minutes at the start of the day before the session topics were decided.

At the Western Australian library un conferences a pre-planned session happened while the session topics were being written into the wiki. They were high energy sessions where the speakers took risks and pushed their own boundaries - with an aim to set the tone for the day. In 2007, two local librarians did a "PowerPoint Karaoke" session. Karen Schneider, who writes the "Free Range Librarian" blog (<http://freerangelibrarian.com/>) in the United States, sent over a set of PowerPoint slides that the presenters saw for the first time when they showed them to the audience. They then had to talk about the slide and create a coherent presentation about the future of libraries.

At the 2008 Western Australian Library Unconference, the first session was a "Libjam". This concept was based on the Australian "webjams", where web developers were given three minutes only to pitch an exciting innovation (Hardy 2007). At the Libjam session, six speakers had just three minutes to talk about what their libraries were doing to "get their hands dirty" with Web 2.0.

COMPARISON BETWEEN CONFERENCES AND UNCONFERENCES

Traditional conferences are usually organised by "an organizational group, private or public body, corporation, trade association, scientific or cultural society" [Rogers, 2003, p.16]. Conferences continue to play a big role in the communication and information sharing process of many professions, including librarianship. This gives them an imprimatur, an "official-ness" that un conferences, which may be organised by groups of unaffiliated individuals, do not necessarily have.

Traditional conferences often have wider national or even international foci and aim to bring together as many people as possible. Professional conferences represent the profession, focus on issues of professional concern, and may provide "discipline-defining vision", and yet, it is claimed, "may fail to meet any single attendee's particular needs" [Louie, 2008, p.5].

Due to their large scale, conferences may take many months to organise. Events of such complexity may require the assistance of specialist conference organisers. Aiming to showcase a profession or present major research findings, conferences usually focus on "big names and popular topics" [Louie, 2008, p.5] and must appeal to as many as possible. Keynote speakers, often chosen for their attraction value, are invited to speak at these events. Some of these speakers may charge expensive fees to appear.

Conferences have an established and defined format and formal structure. Submissions in the form of abstracts are invited from interested members of the profession. These proposals are then vetted by the organisers (or a sub-committee of the organisers). Presentations are usually delivered in the form of talks to the papers submitted. The conference schedule is also decided by the organisers and is set and publicised well in advance of the event.

It is not just in the organisation that the differences between conferences and un conferences can be seen - the underlying expectations are different. In conferences attendees are "the audience", whereas in un conferences attendees are participants. Participant contributions are welcome on the day of an un conference, and in fact are expected - after all, the audience may know more than the presenters [Winer, 2006].

Un conferences vary greatly in venue, facilitation, timing and topics covered. At the core of each un conference are informal, timely, participant driven sessions. This is a contrast to the traditional format for professional library conferences, where a call for papers can happen up to twelve months before the conference, papers are often vetted by a peer review panel and the program is publicised months in advance. The un conference format and the conference format are both useful in different circumstances.

Unconferences cover much more up-to-date topics. If Google announced it had bought OCLC at 10am on a library unconference day, then there would very likely be afternoon sessions to discuss the implications. At a large, technology based library conference, developments within the previous six months tend not to be covered in the papers. They may be touched on incidentally during presentations, but will rarely form the core.

Traditional conferences tend to be better at covering issues in-depth with more research and greater thought. The peer-review process ensures this. Traditional conferences spend a large proportion of their funding to arrange keynote speakers. Six months after our fictional Google buy-out of OCLC, it is possible that a large library conference would have a speaker for "GooCLC" to talk about the change. This is unlikely to happen at an unconference six months after the news broke.

Obviously there is much more certainty about what will be discussed at a traditional conference. Employers can be sure that their employees can attend session they have deemed directly relevant to their enterprise. There is no such guarantee at an unconference - although an employer would be able to instruct an employee to request that a particular session be run. Whether this would happen would depend on who else turned up and was willing to present.

Unconferences and conferences both offer informal networking opportunities. The unconference model tends to incorporate this as a major function of the event, whereas at conferences the program relegates networking an incidental role.

What is the perception of participants of an unconference about the differences between that and a formal conference? At the end of the 2008 West Australian library unconference, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire which sought to examine their experiences and perceptions of the event. The next section discusses their responses to these questions.

SURVEY RESULTS

57 responses to the questionnaire were collected. (See Appendix 3 for the questionnaire.)

28 respondents had attended an unconference before; 22 had attended the 2007 unconference.

55 answered the question "Were your expectations met?" 52 respondents answered yes. This overwhelmingly positive response is despite the fact that many of these respondents made comments about clashes in the timetable which meant they could not attend all the sessions they might have wanted to. Respondents' expectations were varied:

How an unconference works

Didn't care, was just curious and wanting to network

How to apply web 2.0 in a public library environment; about other tools I hadn't heard of

Mashups

What was happening in libraryland

Of the three respondents who said their expectations had not been met, only one explicitly answered no, adding that this was because "Several things [were] going on simultaneously that I would have liked to attend." Another answered both yes and no, adding that this was because they were new to unconferences and "Sometimes I felt frustrated at the lack of a 'setup' but other times I

appreciated the unstructured-ness as it allowed for discussion to flow naturally.” One respondent answered that their expectations had been met “somewhat”; from their comments it would appear that they had not been able to participate more fully because they had wanted to learn about the “basics of Library 2.0”, suggesting that a “basics session for novices” might be useful.

47 respondents answered the question “Did you feel that you had control over the content and timing of the sessions?” 33 respondents answered in the affirmative. One respondent commented “Felt I could come and go as I pleased. Enjoyed flexibility.” Another said that “More control over content was good.” 12 said no, while 2 answered both yes and no: “In between really - not full “control” but some input available.” Many of those who answered no were unhappy about timetable clashes.

Questions: How did this unconference compare to events following the usual “conference” model?

I participated more/less/same

I learned more/less/same

I was bored more/less/same

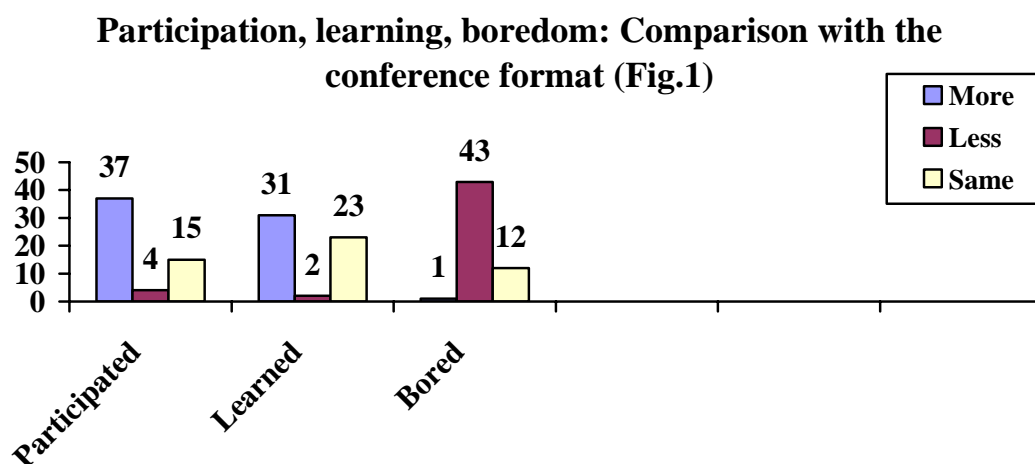


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows responses to questions on perceived levels of participation, learning and boredom at the unconference compared to the traditional conference. 56 out of the 57 respondents answered these questions (the respondent who didn’t answer said that they could not compare as this was their “1st conference (un or otherwise)”).

Respondents said they participated more, learned more and were less bored at the unconference.

We also asked respondents what they thought of the preparedness and professionalism of presenters or facilitators of sessions, as well as the currency or level of up-to-date-ness of information presented, when compared to the traditional conference. Figure 2 shows responses to these questions.

Questions: How did this unconference compare to events following the usual “conference” model?

Presenters were prepared more/less/same

Presenters were professional more/less/same

The topics were up-to-date more/less/same

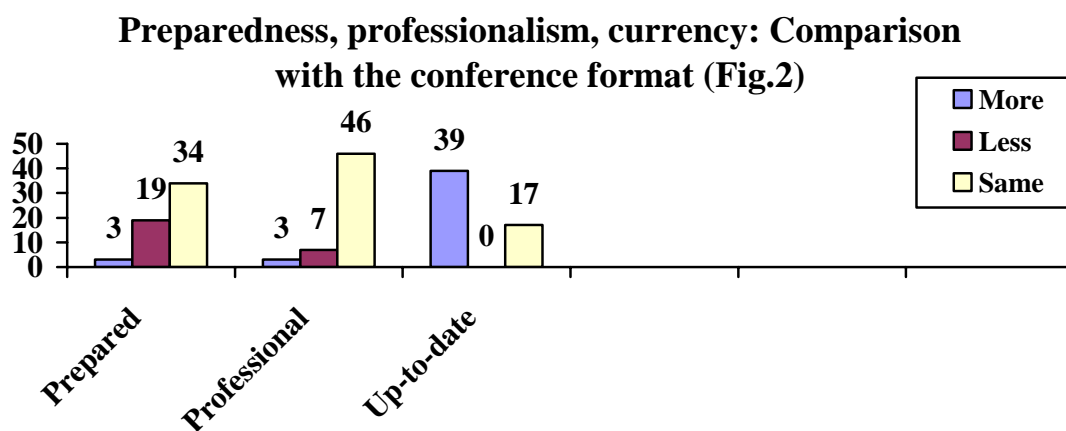


Figure 2

Although a sizeable proportion of the respondents thought that the unconference presenters were less prepared than the presenters at a traditional conference, this did not influence their perception of the presenters as being as professional as those at traditional conferences. Topics presented and discussed at the unconference were seen to be either more up to date than the topics at a traditional conference (39 respondents) or at least as current (17 respondents).

It would appear that most participants considered that the presenters and content at the 2008 West Australian Library Unconference compared favourably to traditional conferences. A possible future research topic could be the investigation of whether unconference participation provides some participants with the information and impetus they need to implement various technologies at their organisations, or if such participation encourages some participants to be more active learners. Certainly many survey respondents indicated in the survey that they now aimed to present at the next unconference, although there was no specific survey question asking this.

CONCLUSION

"There's nothing inherently wrong with a classical conference format... But for all the great people gathered... there are still more misses than hits. I think people are ready for a totally new model." [Knobel, 2004]

We suggest that the unconference can be seen as a natural result of the participatory culture being fostered by the Internet and the growth of Web 2.0 tools. For library professionals the unconference represents one possible method for learning and collaborating, and could be seen as part of a community of practice.

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Appendix 1

Selected Library unconferences

Library Camp Kansas (USA)

<http://librarycampks.wetpaint.com>

Library Camp NYC (Baruch College, New York City, USA)

<http://librarycampnyc.wikispaces.com/>

L2 unconference Melbourne (Melbourne, Australia)

<http://l2unconferencemelbourne.blogspot.com/>

slq Library 2.0 Unconference 2007

<http://slqlibrary2unconference.wetpaint.com/>

LibCamp Boston (Boston, Massachusetts, USA)

<http://libcamp.pbwiki.com/>

Library2.0 on the loose (Perth, Australia)

<http://unconferencewalibrary.pbwiki.com/2007+Library+2+on+the+Loose/>

slq Library 2.0 Unconference (Brisbane, Australia)

<http://slqlibrary2unconference.wetpaint.com/>

Western Australian "School Libraries and Web 2.0" Unconference March 2008

<http://ecawa.pbwiki.com/Agenda+for+School+Libraries+and+Web+2+Unconference>

Non-library unconferences

Berlin/Potsdam, Germany BibCamp 2008 <http://bibcamp.pbwiki.com/>

Perth BarCamp 2007 <http://BarCamp.port80.asn.au/Main/BarCampArchive>

Perth PodCamp 2007 <http://PodCamp.pbwiki.com/perth07>

Jönköping Sweden BibCamp 2008 <http://betabib.hj.se/bibcamp/>

Appendix 2

A selection of topics covered at unconferences:

BarCamp Perth 2007

- Geek ergonomics / how to not get crippled by your computer
- How to evangelise web 2.0 outside the geekosphere/ web 2.0 for the rest of us
- Silicon Beach - does Perth have what it takes to claim the title?
- Introduction to Ruby on Rails
- Graduate Work Experience - Running successful industry projects with final year S.Eng students.

Library2.0 on the loose 2007

- Using delicious
- Finding time for emerging technology
- Generation x, y and z librarians
- Making a Google gadget
- The mobile internet

PodCamp Perth 2007

- Blog fodder
- Photographers in Perth
- Passion and the social web
- OpenID
- Social media and the Federal Election

slq Library 2.0 Unconference 2007

- Sharing library 2.0 things we are doing
- Getting your staff on board
- Mashups and widgets
- Connecting with young adults and teenagers using Library 2.0
- Library 2.0 skeptics

School Libraries and Web 2.0 2008

- Moodle for dummies

- Cool tools
- Using Edublogs
- Using Flash to create simple animation
- Social bookmarking for libraries

Beyond Library 2.0: Getting our hands dirty 2008

- Internet censorship
- Screencasting, slidecasting and screencapture tools
- Inspect-a-gadget: hardware show and tell
- Facebook and libraries
- Twitter, plurk, micronetworking



[APPENDIX 3] Thank you for taking this Survey. The survey should take about ten minutes of your time to complete.

Which industry/sector(s) are you from?

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> National/State Library | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> School | <input type="checkbox"/> Government Department |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TAFE | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Company | <input type="checkbox"/> University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Records/Archive | <input type="checkbox"/> LIS Educator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____ | | |

How did you hear about the W.A. Library Unconference 2008 ?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blog | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listserv | <input type="checkbox"/> Details circulated at work | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other – Please specify _____ | | |

Was this the first W.A Library Unconference you have attended?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

How would you rate your experience of the W.A. Library Unconference 2008?

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Average | <input type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|

Comments:

Would you attend another W.A Library Unconference?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

Would you recommend to your professional colleagues that they attend the next WA Library Unconference?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

If not, why not?

What did you like best about the W.A. Library Unconference 2008?

What did you find most useful?

What did you find least useful?

Which area(s) of the W.A. Library Unconference 2008 do you think could be improved?

What other theme(s) do you think should be explored in any future W.A. Library Unconference?



Kathryn Greenhill and Constance Wiebrands are researching the Unconference format for a paper at the LIANZA conference in November 2008, and possible journal publication. We would appreciate your answers to the questions below.

☐ Please tick this box if you are happy for us to include your responses into our findings. You will not be identified in any way.

How did this Unconference compare to events following the usual "conference" model?

I participated

- ☐ more
- ☐ less
- ☐ same

I learned

- ☐ more
- ☐ less
- ☐ same

I was bored

- ☐ more
- ☐ less
- ☐ same

Presenters were prepared

- ☐ more
- ☐ less
- ☐ same

Presenters were professional

- ☐ more
- ☐ less
- ☐ same

The topics were up-to-date

- ☐ more
- ☐ less
- ☐ same

If this was not your first Unconference, what other Unconference have you attended?

What were you hoping to learn about at this Unconference?

Were your expectations met?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

Did you present or facilitate any sessions at this Unconference?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

Did you feel that you had the control you wanted over the content and timing of the sessions?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

If you have any questions or comments about our research our contact details are below:

Kathryn Greenhill k.greenhill@murdoch.edu.au
Constance Wiebrands c.wiebrands@curtin.edu.au